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UNCLAS AMMAN 006505

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

USDA/FAS/OA/BSIMMONS
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EPA/JANDERSON

CAIRO FOR FAS - ASIF CHAUDRY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EAGR ETRD SENV TBIO TSPL KPAO JO
SUBJECT: Jordan: No Biotech Regulations

REF: STATE 263456

Sensitive but Unclassified

¶1. (U) According to senior officials of the Jordanian
health and agriculture ministries, Jordan does not
currently have agricultural biotechnology laws or
regulations. They did not preclude that such regulations
might be put in place, but did not suggest that any
planning was underway to do so.

¶2. (SBU) The Secretary General of the Ministry of
Agriculture, Dr. Awni Taimi, told ECON/C and Ag
Specialist that Saudi Arabian biotech labeling
requirements were "creating a problem" for Jordan. He
said questions had been raised about Jordanian exports to
Saudi Arabia of animals and animal products that had been
fed U.S.-origin feed. Jordan had no way of determining
if such feed contained modified organisms, but suspected
that it did given the widespread use of biotech products
in the United States. So far, Taimi said, no Jordanian
shipments had been blocked by Saudi Arabia, but he was
concerned that some could be in the future.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: We do not exclude the possibility
that Jordan might one day put in place biotech labeling
requirements, although it probably lacks the technical
ability to enforce them. The benefits of biotechnology
are not well-understood, and the public is, in general,
conservative and suspicious of hard to understand
innovations, particularly when they come from the West.
Post has distributed public affairs materials on
biotechnology, including the recent "Economic
Perspectives" journal on Agricultural Biotechnology. We
could put additional material -- particularly in Arabic,
as well as Arabic-language speakers on the subject from
the United States or other countries in the region -- to
good use.
GNEHM